Leicester, February 25. 1862

Dear friend Webb;

I am your debtor for several letters, which I could not pay off in one, were it ever so good a one; and with a "parcel of children" round me to-day, I fear I may make a poor hand of it now. — In our normal state, our Bessie (now a girl of nearly 12 & tall of her age) is our only child; but just now we have two others, - one little, quiet, delicate girl of 8½, (the child of my wife's eldest sister who died, very suddenly, a little more than 3 weeks ago:) has been with us a fortnight, - She is very bright, & in her talk almost womanly; - then we have a Boston boy, 11 yrs. old, the son of my sister, who comes to spend his vacation of a week, - winter as it is, - bringing his "sled" with him; - all children with us, boys or girls, have sleds, & usually skates, and the winter sports are considered the finest of the year. We have had a beautiful February thus far - or rather until yesterday - mild, & free from the usual high winds; there has scarcely been a day when the children couldn't play out for hours, "coasting" as 'tis called, which perhaps you don't know is seating, or otherwise placing, themselves upon these long, narrow, iron-shod sleds, and sliding (or rather tearing) down hill at a great rate. — Yesterday we had the combination (most unusual for winter) of rain, hail, thunder & lightning, followed by almost a hurricane of wind and a blinding snow storm. The wind, accompanied with a fall of the thermometer to Zero of Fahrenheit, continues to-day - making it one of the most "tedious" days, to use a Yankee-ism, we have had all winter. So the children are shut up in house mostly, & though very good children, of course must talk, play, laugh, &c. - which is not helpful to letter-writing; - but, now, Bessie has gone to her morning-school, & the other two have suddenly thought of some play

up-stairs, and disappeared together like a flash. Pray excuse my particulars of meteorology and household affairs. I may add that my wife and Ade. are in good health - that my own health is as good as I can reasonably expect at present, and that I am expecting to resume my office duties in Boston on the 1st of March. - Edward, for whom yours kind remembrance continues, is still on the So. Carolina coast - we had a letter from him yesterday. We hear about once (within sight) in 10 days. He has lately been near Savannah, with a pretty strong forces of both army & navy; - the latter have been deterred from getting ~~very near~~ nearer than 7 miles the city, by Sunken batteries, torpedoes, &c. - sometimes called "infernal machines" - placed to impede & destroy vessels. One very powerful one had been partially removed, - one of the large canisters (of which there were 5 fastened together by wires) was separated, placed on shore, & being fired at, exploded with a noise, Edward said, to which, the noise of their own large gun, (a pivot gun of 11 inch bore) was but as that of a fire-cracker, and tearing up the earth for yards around. To have encountered 5 of those machines together, & met their united explosion, would have made short work of their vessel & their lives. Edw^d. chafed a good deal at the delay thus caused in their operations. The land forces are now very near Savannah, and its capture is, I think, only a question of a week or two, less or more. My other son, Joseph Russell, now 17 yrs. old, has just commenced his business life in the Store of Hovey and Co. in Boston, the partners, friends, & successors of our late excellent friend Charles F. Hovey.

I have had a letter from M^c^Kim, saying he still had 25 copies of his 60 of "John Brown" on hand, and wanted no more at present. I think that, in 2 or 3 months, we may be in a condition to order more of you. I shall bear it in mind, & do what I can. Write me what the cost to us would be, in Dublin, of your bound volumes? Could we get them at a rate, when freight

& charges & duties are added, to sell them at $1. We should not like to ask more, as we have sold hitherto at that rate? We do not care to make any profit on them, of course.

I wrote to you by last week's mail - enclosing 2 notes - and also 2 photographs which my wife sent to you, of herself & Ade. It was a double letter, and I knew it was; but being late for the post, and in a great hurry, I put on the customary 2 stamps, thinking at the moment that that was correct double postage; - nor did the postmaster's assistant correct my mistake, tho' himself aware it was a double letter. I suppose therefore the postage paid by me is thrown away, and you will be charged 2/. Now I depend on you to let me know if this is so - that I may make it right with you. - I hope in time to get your photograph. - In a late note you speak of some postage of your own. I believe it was understood that all our Anti-Slavery correspondence (& it nearly all is wholly or mainly) should be paid by me, here, I charging it, so much as is A-Slavery, to our Society, of course. - The photog[s] last week made the additional postage, which of course I did not (& should not had I paid the postage correctly) charge to the Soc[y]. — I hope you have received the parcel by Mrs. Abigail Hewson. — I believe I told you that, as you requested, I sent to Mr. Sulist the copy of John Brown's Life.

Just as I was about closing mine to you last week, your note of Feb. 1[st] arrived. I read no farther than its first topic, and immediately hurried to send a reply to that - viz. your remark that you had heard your Standard letters did not give satisfaction. When I had said, tho' briefly, what I had to say, my time was up, & more; - I nearly lost the chance of getting the letter into the mail. But I desire to re-iterate all I said there. Your letters do give pleasure & general satisfaction. That we should accept & believe every opinion & view of yours, you would neither expect nor wish; and we are all the better for having honest men & women express to us candidly their own opinions, however differing from ours. No one would

say, sooner than McKim, that you must not stop writing, for any such reason or imagination as you allege. — The trouble about Miss Martineau is, not at all that she has differed from us widely, or espoused untenable opinions, but that she has written to us in a strain of domineering and lecturing and censuring really quite unbearable. She played off these School-Mistress airs (if I may so call them, to you, & in confidence) on the subject of our Tariff, and it was borne by us all, tho' a wholly irrelevant topic, if we chose to be strict about it; — scarcely one of the A.S. writers proper took any notice of it, and it was left to Horace Greeley to furnish one article in the way of a reply. When, however, she intro the same strain, pitched in even a higher key, into the qu of Slavery & the rebellion, and our Government's course actual and expected in the war, it was beyond even peace folks' bearing. How flatly & superciliously she contradicte me, on a question of facts, in her letter in Standard of Feb. 15 I was obliged to reply to that (Feb. 22?), and I think rather to her discomfiture on that point; — but I left it to her to "own up" as we say, & make the amende honorable if she pleases; and there I hope, so far as I am concerned, will be the end of controversy with H. M. — In spite of your strong endorsement of her knowledge of American affairs, (and, as a general thing, I agree to and believe all you say of her,) I must say, and I say it very emphatically, that, in respect to the Rebellion - the War - the Course of our Government - and the prevailing Tone & Spirit of our Northern States, - there are a dozen English writers and speakers who have shown a very much better understanding of them all than she. She got angry with the country about the Tariff, & that warped her from her bearings, so that she was not in the right state of mind to look at us, when we came to deal with the Rebellion of the Slaveholders. I do not give this as merely my construction. Every one speaks of the temper her letters evince. Of course we shan't ask her to stop writing; but she has essentially damaged her influence here, I am quite sure.

To some other points in yours of Feb. 1st, I would reply, and in so doing shall also answer similar ones in your previous notes, perhaps. [You object to our taking the London Times as an exponent of British thought and feeling; and we know it is not the mouthpiece of any honest opponent of Slavery. We know that its care is to distort, misrepresent, and falsify every fact of our republican government and people, and, if possible, to argue or sneer us out of existence. We know that, for years, its sympathies and its support have all been with the Slaveholding section of our country; and we understand now how it was, that, with an entire want of any principle or the subjection of buying & selling men, & working & using them like cattle, it could encourage and urge on every slaveholders' measure with the purpose to divide and destroy our nation. We know that such a paper cannot be the representative of the real, honest thought of the great body of the people of Great Britain. On the other hand, we have the very strongest reason to think that it does represent, and is the virtual organ of, a very numerous and a very powerful section of the people of England, — of a section which, if not always dominant & controlling, does always have a strong influence upon the measures of the Government. That section embraces the aristocratic supporters of things as they are, a firm monarchy &c. - men who thoroughly & cordially hate (like Blackwood's Magazine) the very name of Republic, Free Suffrage, & Human Equality; — and also the great majority of those whose capital and living are all embarked & identified with the commercial and manufacturing operations of the land. The "thunderer" does not become so, because uttering its own thunder merely, but because the potent voices of millions of wealthy and influential men - the ordinarily most influential classes - roll forth together thro' its columns. I do not think we give the Times any more credit for influence as an organ than belongs to it; it certainly is neither our interest or policy, as a people, to do so. But I do think it is far more entitled to be considered the leading British press, than the New York Herald is entitled to be considered as holding the same place in this country, - as so many of your

countrymen think of it. And it is very true that the Newyork Herald has a large circulation and is very widely read amongst us. But its circulation is much less than that of the Tribune, and its readers as a class altogether inferior in character and real intelligence to the readers of the Tribune or of the Newyork Times. It commands the support of men & classes who need and like an unscrupulous organ, one which can shift sides easily & quickly, and advocate to-day without shame what it denounced as the worst thing conceivable yesterday. A facile and a venal sheet will always have the support of the selfish, dishonest, and scheming. There are too many such in every country. The Herald is eminently the organ of such here. Perhaps the Times is equally the organ of such in England; but I think, also, of a far more reputable ~~& intelligent~~ class. The Times ~~always~~ equally maintains a certain decorum and dignity in all its fulminations and falsehoods. The Herald is always and only low - irretrievably vulgar, - openly & unblushingly ready to serve wherever and from whomsoever it can get the most pay in the long run. It will always be on the winning side, if it knows it, with utter unconcern about consistency.

It is lamentably true that our newspaper journals have a great power for mischief as well as for good; and, on both sides the water, they have done much, very much beyond doubt, to excite the public mind unjustly, in regard to topics of difference between us. Upon those topics, I have no wish to enlarge now; and yet something seems necessary, to vindicate our position. We were both surprised and disappointed to see how quickly (how seemingly spontaneously) and how furiously the flame of war-feeling against this country burst forth in England. It was a revelation of an unexpected fact. We had always heard, from England, how strong & inimical was the feeling of our country against yours. We were very

little aware of it, ourselves, and didn't really believe in it; and yet had not in the way of supposing it must be so, until the visit here of the Prince of Wales, and the cordial good feeling towards him, his royal mother, and the people he represented, expressed universally by all the people & journals, city & country, of our Northern States, afforded a proof which must have convinced any but a stubbornly unbelieving mind of the non-existence among us of any ~~deep-a~~ considerable enmity to England. I am bound to say, that the same thing could not be said now, with equal truth. Our nation and government ~~were have been~~ treated, in the Mason and Slidell case, as tho' an intentional insult to England had been planned and executed. Nothing could be further than that from the truth. No insult, or discourtesy, to England was imagined, - this may be fearlessly & broadly claimed - while it is very true, that, in the first burst of joy & setting into our hands two of the most wily and influential enemies of our Government, two of the most inveterate of the plotters against our national life, two of the most extreme defenders of Slavery & the Slave-trade, some things were said of a foolish and possibly of a defiant character: all these however were quite matched, to some extent provoked, by the department of the officers in the Trent. But of ninety-nine in every hundred of the people, no wish or thought of hostility or discourtesy to England had any part in their exultation over the capture of those men, - whose character and whose past lives the London Times subsequently described so well, & justly. No English vessel ought to have received them; They were not refugees, They were not seeking or desiring an asylum. They would have been the first to reject the idea, & with scorn, that they were flying to an asylum! They were going as the proud, liberty-hating, representatives of a new "power in the earth", Commissioners to England & France from a new Confederacy

which had just laid the foundations of its being upon the right of ownership of human beings. With that purpose, and in that character, solely, they were sent to Europe to seek means to subvert a government with which England was ~~in a true~~ a country essentially one with England in spirit, allied by treaty, and to set up in perpetuity a Slaveholding and Slavetrading Oligarchy, to the shame of the whole world. I maintain that those two villainous men ("Southern gentlemen", a high English authority has called them) were rightful our prisoners, wherever we could take them, provided we did harm to no one else. The injury, and great injury, was done to us by their being received on the Front at all. With a full disclaimer of any intentional slight or disrespect to England, which might have been most truthfully given on the part of the American people and ample payment of any loss incurred by detention or otherwise, the prisoners should have been left in our possession. ~~and even~~ But I know I am no diplomatist, but such seems to me the dictate of common sense and of justice. Had they been flying for their lives, & seeking protection, the case would have been wholly different. Now the plea of Right of asylum is absurd, and only adds to the ill-feeling already engendered. I rejoice to say that the utter indifference, the slight indeed, shown to both these bad men on English soil, has done much to reconcile the American mind to the course things have taken. Still the feeling is, generally, that advantage was taken of our embarrassment to launch this trouble ~~twice~~ hotly upon us, and with it to launch a powerful force of troops and of ships upon our borders.

I have no time or room to refer to the numerous marked successes of the American forces over the rebels in Kentucky, Tennessee, & North Carolina. But the papers will tell you of these

[96 If there H[illegible] paper que[illegible] for dispatch they are at your service. Yours truly, A. Lincoln]